

▼ AUGUST 15 • 1996

TOP PHOTO • MALONE

Our Voice

The spare change newspaper

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Hope

Keeping it alive...

Maureen Malone, a Calgary photographer, says this picture of a family shows hope for her. She donated the photo to the Hope Foundation's collection, The Images of Hope. Feature story see pages 6 & 7



The Big Tuna

Footballer helps out
See BACK COVER



IS GOOD HEALTH CARE HARDER TO GET FOR POOR PEOPLE?

Talking Back

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ YOUR COMMENTS

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NEWS • of the World

Take me to your television!

Alien alert! According to an American study, it's "almost certain" that humankind will be in contact with extraterrestrials by the year 2000. Events are well ahead of schedule in Gordon, Nebraska, however, where police were not only in contact with a spaceman, but actually arrested one. The alien in question was 37-year-old Marlon Snottins, who had been disguising himself as a visitor from outer space in order to steal people's electrical equipment. "He arrived in the middle

of the night in a space suit," explained one victim, "and said he needed our television to take back to his planet for experiments." Amazingly, 11 families fell for the ruse, handing over a variety of expensive household goods to Mr Snottins, who was only rumbled when he asked one victim if he could use her lavatory. He is now in prison and will, according to one policeman, "not be returning to his own solar system for at least five years". ♦

Just a little case of wedding jitters

It's all been going horribly wrong at weddings. In Milan, groom Bruno Bastit attacked a waiter he caught making love to his bride at the reception. "He was supposed to be handing round the vol-au-vents," he explained. At least the wedding itself went OK, unlike that of Frenchman Laurent Robertin, 27, who got married with a toilet glued to his bottom. Disaster struck when Mr Robertin went to the toilet on his wedding morning. Unbeknown to him, friends had smeared his loo-seat with heavy duty glue, causing him to

stick fast as soon as he sat down. "I tried to get up," explained the glued-groom. "But it felt like my bottom was ripping off." Calls for help proved fruitless and eventually, in desperation, he unscrewed the seat and rushed to church with it still attached to his posterior, wrapped only in a Jacques Cousteau 'Fish of the World' duvet. "I told the priest I'd had an accident on the toilet," recalled Mr Robertin, "but he said 'Don't worry my son, it's just nerves', and then we were married. It was the happiest day of my life." ♦

Don't mess with mango chutney

It's all been going horribly wrong with mango chutney. In Miami, a motorist was killed after colliding with a tanker full of the stuff. "It was a sweet, slightly spicy condiment, with pulped mango segments," wailed the man's distraught wife. Even more tragic were events in Thailand, where a man was killed whilst doing the breast stroke in a chutney vat. Kama Sen, 35, had just finished his shift at the Imperial Mango Refinery when disaster struck. "We were leaving the factory," explained colleague Segha Kwek, "when Kama said 'Guess

what I'm going to do? I'm going to swim across that chutney vat'." True to his word, Mr Sen stripped to his underpants and dived into the chutney. Fellow workers cheered him on, and he had almost reached the far side when, in his excitement, Mr Kwek accidentally kicked a plugged-in radio into the vat, rendering the chutney live and fatally electrocuting his friend. "It was funny," said Mr Kwek, "because the radio was playing a song called Little Girl with a Million Mangoes." ♦

Call the air force, cries high flyer

Around the world people have been having dreadful experiences with kites. In New York, a man was killed when his kite was struck by lightning. In France, meanwhile, a man was flown to death by his giant yellow super kite. Vincent Dubarry, 31, of Venelles, had spent six months creating the 20 foot by 6 foot kite, waiting several weeks for suitable weather conditions before taking it to a local park for testing. "It was massive," said one onlooker. "I said, 'Is it hard to fly?' and he said

'No, no, it's as gentle as a baby', which is when he took off." It appears that the monster kite was seized by a freak gust of wind which dragged it high into the atmosphere with its owner dangling behind. "I shouted 'Are you alright?'" recalled an eyewitness. "But he cried, 'Call the air force!' and then disappeared into the clouds." His body was eventually found in a field 42 miles away. "If only he'd stuck with stamp collecting," said Mr Dubarry's tearful wife. ♦

Above articles compiled by Paul Sussman in *The Big Issue*, London England's street-sold magazine.

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OUR
VOICE
AUGUST 15
1996
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VENDOR • Profile

Tammy McKay

BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

"Two main reasons that I sell **Our Voice**," says Tammy McKay, "are you meet a lot of nice people and the money helps to pay the bills."

Tammy doesn't encounter many problems while selling the paper, though she runs into the odd surly person who gives her a dirty look. "At least they could give you a smile," she says.

Tammy, who is now twenty, has been selling **Our Voice** for quite a while now. Things are going better for her now than they were a few years ago.

Born and raised in Edmonton, Tammy had a baby boy, Steven, when she was fifteen. Though on maternity leave from her job as a custodial cleaner, when she returned to claim the job after giving birth, she found out she had been replaced. This upset her greatly and, confused and hurt by this unexpected change of events, she took to the road, leaving her baby in the care of her father.

When she returned to Edmonton, Social Services gave Tammy the option of giving up her baby in order to get an educational subsidy. Tammy opted to keep her child, become a responsible parent, and work to support him. She got some unexpected help from a friend who introduced her to Dave, who became Tammy's common law husband.



The first meeting between Tammy and Dave took place over coffee. And Tammy remembers it fondly. So does Dave. He jokes about it being "the longest cup of coffee he's had with anyone."

Since finding each other, Tammy and Dave have had two more children, another son, Garon, and a daughter, Heather Dawn. Though some days are a bit of a struggle, the family manages to stay together, proving Social Services wrong in thinking Tammy couldn't make it as a mother. She has managed to finish her grade nine and, being an optimist at heart, has set goals for future upgrading so she can land a "good job so I can give my kids a good future."

Both Tammy and Dave sell **Our Voice**. It's how they are paying the rent and feeding the kids these days. They've had other jobs, but right now Dave says he can't find anything steady.

Recently Tammy and Dave adopted a sixth family member, a pet South American ferret named Misty Lee. Tammy says Misty Lee helps her with the children, entertaining them and keeping them out of mischief. ❖

The people who bring you **OUR VOICE**

This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **OUR VOICE** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **OUR VOICE**. ❖

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- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized

All **OUR VOICE** vendors are required to wear an ID badge (contents above) and abide by a code of conduct. If you have any comments about our vendors, phone our distribution manager in your city (see page 5).

Letter to Brian G. from a concerned reader

Dear Brian,

I have been moved by your letters in *Our Voice*, and have felt compelled to write you.

It sounds to me that you are getting closer to leaving the dark side behind and coming into the light. It sure sounds as if the desire is there.

I'm here to tell you to fight, fight your way out of that darkness. You are used to fighting for everything. You can do it if you try.

I know what I'm talking about. I've been there and back. I have a daughter who was there. She chose at a young age to get involved with some street people. This one guy in particular was real bad and led her

down a path that was not one she would have chosen. But once she was in it was, as you know, very hard to get out. She was prostituting for him and into the drug scene pretty bad.

We didn't know at first what was going on. But we took her away from there once after she had been beaten up by her pimp. The next day she left after receiving a threatening phone call from him.

After that the police called us to come and get her, they were holding her in jail. She had just done them a favour acting as a decoy in a drug bust. It wasn't really a favour, I guess, because she had been busted for possession and they made a deal with her.

The next night when she was still at home, we got a phone call at 4 a.m. in the morning from the police,

saying her life was in danger, and to keep an eye on her. We were able to do that, and she stayed home.

Brian, she is 26 now, married, has children and is happy. Whether you want to hear this or not, I'll tell you that I know for a fact that my faith and my prayers kept her safe.

Listen to the good side of yourself, because obviously there is one. Do what is right. Life is a struggle for everyone, but you might as well be happy while you're struggling. All that power that you talk about isn't going to do you good dead.

You're reaching out. I'm reaching back.
With love, ...❖

The letter writer wished to remain anonymous.



Talking Back

Are welfare allowances adequate?

The phone rang off the hook in response to this question. All but one caller, who said there should be no welfare, said allowances were too low. The words were powerful from just some of the responses:

I am on a medical disability because I have HIV infection. Myself and my 2 children receive a little over \$1000 each month. After we pay our rent and utilities, we have \$200 a month to live for food and clothing and everything else.

We live in utter, abject poverty and I'm looking at having to spend my last days living like that, living with two children. It seems as if the government is punishing me for being sick. Something is happening to Canadian society that we don't seem to be willing to look after the people that need it the most anymore. We've lost our value system. The saddest part is that a society is judged based on how they treat their poor. Canadian society isn't measuring up to what it used to be: a place where people gave a damn about other people and looked after people who needed it the most. I find that very sad. I hope this is a wake up call to government about how they are treating us and things get better. Thanks.

Welfare allowances are adequate... I know that they're not. I work as a social worker in the income support program and I see everyday how inadequate the allowances are, particularly for shelter. People are living in situations that some-

times aren't safe, aren't safe for their children, simply because they can't afford the rent for a better place.

I work as a social worker in the income support program and I see every day how inadequate the allowances are, particularly for shelter. People are living in situations that sometimes aren't safe, aren't safe for their children, simply because they can't afford the rent for a better place.

They can't give their children a decent life, having clothes like the other kids do, having recreation money or spending money for the kids, this is just out of the question. There's not enough money in people's budgets when they are on welfare.

I don't know what can be done. I work in the system and we can't change it in the system, I know I've tried.

Don't leave enough money for people to live on, let alone survive. I can't believe they think people can live on as a single parent, \$820 a month.... You're paying \$550 a month for a decent place to live and you've got your utilities and everything else by the time you finish. You want your children growing up thinking not everything's easy. But you would like to get them into some sports to keep them off the streets, it doesn't leave money for sports or any activity to get your child into, and build their self confidence.

No the money isn't adequate and I wish somebody would tell the minister that.

I consider them totally inadequate and totally unjust. I would regard the fact we have so much wealth in this society and at the same time we have so many poor people as a criminal situation. We live in a property owning society so anyone who is dispossessed or marginal or poor, they are pushed down, they are oppressed, they are denigrated and they are dispossessed even further.

I think that the whole structure of this society is acting against the poor. They have no voice. You have a voice which I very much support.

No they definitely are not adequate. I feel the Canadian rich are very, very greedy and too few people have too much and way too many people have too little. Thank you.

I don't feel in this day and age we should have welfare. People should be made to work for what they get. There's plenty of work in the community, plenty of disabled people and elderly people need assistance. There's yard work, shopping, snow clearing to be done. There's lots of work if people want to work for it. But if the welfare system insists on paying people to sit at home they will sit at home. I don't believe in it at all. ❖

Resumé inflation

Time was when a typed resumé was good enough. Then word processing came along and keeners did their resumé on computer: bullets, bolding, different type sizes. Now a lot of resumé are desktop-published. Fancy fonts, reverse lettering, frames. Practically no resumé's are printed on plain white bond paper anymore. Everyone knows the trick of using slightly stiffer paper so your resumé will stand out in a stack. It doesn't work when everyone does it.

My own resumé looks as good as an oil company's annual report. It should; it was designed by a graphic artist friend who also does annual reports for oil companies. But how many unemployed people can afford that? On the other hand, who can afford not to do it? In the cold, cruel world of job hunting, a lot of people are rejected on the basis of their resumé's alone.

I recently witnessed a deluge of 120 resumé's for one job opening. Some applicants had their own business cards. A business card for an unemployed person? In what seems to be a new trend, several people had title pages on their resumé's, saying "Resumé of Jonathan Stubik" and the like. What's next? Professionally produced resumé videos? Everyone trying to get an edge just raises the standard all around—to no one's benefit. Resumé inflation forces everyone to put more effort (and expense) into their resumé's without any overall benefit for anyone except secretarial services. If resumé's become any more standardized and professionalized, they will lose what little value they currently have in telling you something about the applicant.

Job creation

Programs aimed at helping the unemployed often focus on resumé writing and interview skills. An unemployed person needs a job not a resumé. A glossy resumé and the poise of Laurence Olivier won't help when there aren't enough jobs to go around. And when real jobs exist, people will be hired for them, whether they have slick desktop-published resumé's or not. Training programs should provide job skills, not merely job-getting skills.

Three years ago the Liberals campaigned on a promise of jobs. Today unemployment has once again gone over 10%. Finance minister Paul Martin has stated that he has no plans to change the federal government's economic strategy. Unemployed people have little to look forward to until the spectre of the next election inspires some pre-election spending by the Liberals.

Ask anyone who's unemployed how easy it is to get a job. A job is fundamental to dignity in our society. No one who wants and needs to work should be denied that opportunity. That's the real right to work.

BARBARA LAUBER
CALGARY EDITOR

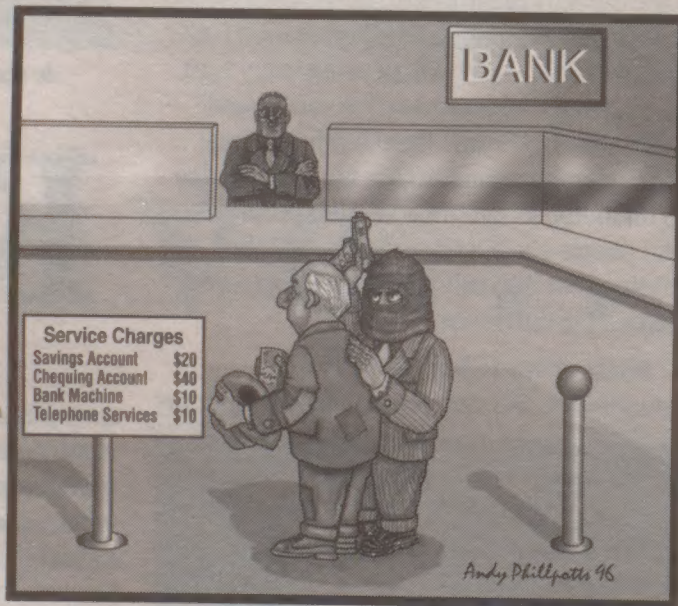
Summer life on the streets

Rubbing shoulders with our fellow Canadians is still a big summer-time activity. When the weather is warm, our streets are crowded with people and action. It's a real cultural mixer, as executives and lawyers in their summer sport shorts-wear share sidewalks with punk kids, and the poorer people who spend so much time on the street year round. It's a study in contrasts. Walking down the street you can see side-by-side the different classes in our society. There are the tanned, scantily-clad, beaming healthy people, walking alongside the often over-dressed (when you've only got the one change of clothes), tanned (not from sun-bathing or lamps, just the rigor of outdoor life) fellow citizens.

Is there more panhandling than there was in the past? As the contrasts grow between the healthy wealthy, and the poorer people, and as poorer people become more desperate, perhaps there is more "panhandling". It's so nice to call it panhandling but it really is begging, just like it would be on the street in Mexico City or Bombay. It's the result of poverty here, poverty and desperation, just as it would be in a South American capital. While our society is stratifying even more, with bigger and bigger winners, and more and more, worse and worse losers, we can expect begging to grow.

Perhaps we will move even more to the American style where the "healthy wealthy" abandon the streets to the less well-off. That would be deplorable. As long as society continues to mix on the street, the contrasts are there to see, not out-of-sight, out-of-mind. ♦

KEITH WILEY



"No I'm the bank manager, We're being more open about our service charges policy."

Our Voice

The spare change newspaper

Of hope & welfare rates

Hope, sometimes it can be hard to hold on to. But maybe it's not as slippery as all that. **Jim Gurnett's** talk with Ronna Jevne of The Hope Foundation is an inspiring look at what keeps people pushing on.

It's always difficult to write about someone who has died, but **Linda Dumont** wrote the piece on very well-known Edmonton people's advocate Mary Burlie. Linda had known Mary for 25 years. Hats off to Linda's courage in writing this piece.

Calgary writer **Candy Watson** did the fun back cover on the football player who helps, Bruce Covernton, The Big Tuna.

Author **Laurie McCullough** graces our pages with the first of two parts of his short story **Larry's Sister**, an intriguing look at youth gone awry on the prairies.

Our Talking Back question on whether welfare rates were adequate drew a vociferous response from many angry readers. See what they say on page 4.

New contributor **Andy Phillpotts** gave us the editorial cartoon. Assistant editor Barbara Lauber in Calgary wrote the lead editorial piece this issue. Edmonton assistant editor Tom Hind helped with a good deal of editing on the Employment Profiles and other pieces.

John Zapantis did the vendor profile, **Linda Dumont** drew us more cartoons, **Derek Oliver** of Vancouver again contributed a cartoon. Fellow Vancouverite **Susan Andrews** contributed the crossword as usual.

In coming issues...

We're taking on some different stories, Hunger in our Cities, Buses for people to get around, Welfare shopping.... Watch for some informative new perspective stories in this fall's issues of **Our Voice**.

KEITH WILEY

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"Sure, it's easy for you to talk about hope, you've got a job, a paycheque every second Friday, your kids go to school every morning with a good breakfast in their tummies, you can afford to go to a ball game once in a while - but me, I haven't had a job for more than a year and my wife left me last month. Don't talk to me about hope."

B Y J I M G U R N E T T

Ever heard stories like that? Or perhaps you've heard a comment more like this—

"Hope. Yeah it's a nice word. A nice fuzzy feeling. Like the tooth fairy or Santa Claus—great to make children feel good. But life is tough and you get through by being tough, not by using rose-coloured— or hope-coloured—glasses. You've got to face reality, that's all there is to it. Forget the 'pie in the sky' stuff."

And yet, not a day goes by that each of us doesn't talk about hope in some way:

"I hope I can keep this job cleaning for another week— then I'll have enough saved to go home and visit the folks in Winnipeg."

"I hope this weather lasts until Saturday. I've been planning to take the kids to the park for a picnic and I don't want it to rain."

We all know about hope, even if we never give it much thought. Maybe we are missing out on a very powerful tool we could be using to handle the challenges of life better. What if we stopped treating hope like a chance circumstance and started to be deliberate about it? What if hope is not just something we might be lucky enough to have but is a set of skills (like learning to ride a bicycle or sew or repair an engine) we can learn and use day by day to make a better life for ourselves?

The Hope Foundation in Edmonton is per-

haps the only organization in the world working entirely with hope. The Foundation has worked with people experiencing every type of challenge— diseases such as cancer and AIDS, prison, chronic mental illness, long-term unemployment, major life changes due to disability, long-term addiction problems, and people considering suicide. And they are finding that the daily practice of hope can make a big difference.

Ronna Jevne is part of The Hope Foundation. She says "I have learned from my



▲ Ronna Jevne



▲ Rejoice! A newborn.

Keeping

own experiences in life that hope takes us forward, despite the painful experiences and losses that come our way. Now I want to see if what we are learning about hope can be passed along to other people so they can put it to work in their lives too."

I talked with Ronna Jevne about hope recently.

JG: Hardly a week goes by that someone we know doesn't either die or get told by a doctor they have a serious illness. What use is hope for people facing life-threatening situations?

RJ: Death and illness reminds us that life is fragile. And it can be tough to find hope at such times. I remember how difficult it was to know what to say when my grandson died at one month of age. "Even my hope is gone. I'm so tired," his father John said.

We can start by treating the unwell like people, not broken things. We can give hope to friends and family by encouraging them to do the same, by not condemning or judging, by not taking time.

We can focus on the little things. Hope isn't escapism. Hope is realistic. Those who hope don't give up. Those who hope listen. Those who hope are open to other people. Those who hope are not in the mainstream of media.

Death is not the enemy—my friend was diagnosed with cancer. He was dying, lying on his hospital bed. Then one day a little boy in the midst of chemotherapy therapy came into his room pushing his IV stand. He was holding a broken toy. He asked me if I would help fix the toy.



Hope

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"That's when I decided to start building a wall between hope and hopelessness and get on with living, when I realized that instead of thinking about what illness had taken away from me, I should focus on the possibilities I still had," he told me.

JG: When our friends are going through tough times what can we say besides "I'm sorry"?

RJ: We lose hope when we are afraid of being abandoned and left alone while others move on with their lives or when we fear we are losing control of our life.

One important thing to say is "I care". Another thing to say is "I am listening". Sometimes the person will want you to have an in-depth discussion about the big questions but other times they might like to know what's going on out in the world. They might

enjoy talking about football or a community event.

A third thing to say is "I will do what I can to support you in your way of coping." We don't need to give a lot of advice— there are enough experts around. Hope companions don't give a bunch of answers— they offer support where the person is. Each of us is different and there are no right or wrong ways to be. Some need to get angry, others to be depressed and others to use denial. Let them. But stay nearby.

And that leads to another thing to say. "I am willing to help." You can support a person's hope by doing what you are comfortable doing.

JG: What about false hope? Can we— or should we— hope against the odds? Isn't that just denying the facts?

RJ: I think the greater danger is accepting the worst possibility and assuming things will turn out badly. If you are told by a doctor that only five out of 100 people survive a certain disease, why decide you are one of the 95 who will NOT survive? Why not focus on the fact that five per cent WILL survive?

We all know people who have "beaten the odds", so lets say "Yes" to life and get on with it rather than start shutting down. Hope is a risk but it is also a bridge to a richer and more satisfying life.

One person told me "Expect nothing but hope for everything"— I like that. Hope is not a guarantee. It's a chance.

JG: What can we do if we want to make hope a bigger part of our lives?

RJ: Get to know ourselves better and honestly! Sit down with a mug of coffee and think back over the years. What moments in life have taught you about hope? Who are the people you have known who have taught you about hope? What experiences have drained your hope away?

You might try creating a "hope kit". We have first aid kits for physical injury. Why not a hope kit for unexpected difficulties? Maybe you will have an actual container with items you could use to keep you going through the difficult times. Maybe it will just be in your mind. Each of our kits will be different. I've seen people include a letter from a grandparent, a rock from a favorite beach, sweetgrass, a favorite cartoon, a candle to push back the darkness, a blanket from a first child, a certificate for great job performance— the possibilities are endless.

Keeping a journal where you write about your experiences of hope day by day is helpful for many people. Someone else might decide to put on a banquet of hope and invite some special friends and cook his favourite dishes. Another person might decide to cover a whole wall with pictures that say something about hope to her. What is hopeful for one person is different than for another.

When we look around we see a lot of dark clouds. We can retreat from them into a corner and play it safe. Or we can move out with hope. Every time I go down the street I see people doing just this— moving out with hope. It might be the jobless person who is selling **Our Voice** on the corner, the woman with muscular dystrophy zipping along in a motorized chair, or the refugee who was a dentist in her own country and has arrived here with nothing and is now doing janitor work to feed her family.

The Hope Foundation is a registered charitable organization dedicated to helping people and their families whose hope is challenged by enduring physical or mental health conditions.

You can contact The Hope Foundation at 11032-89 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 0Z6, 403 492-1222.

Jim Gurnett is executive director of The Hope Foundation. ♦

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WORDS • On the Street

Pill Dispensers and Easy Cash

BY BRIAN G

On Tuesday, 16 July, I set out on a mission to score scripts from doctors. The pills I needed to score are Tylenol 4s, Valium 10s, and Electrolux. All three are hot commodities on the street. I bought four doctors' names from a guy for \$5.00. I will make my investment back by selling three Tylenol 4s, which go for two dollars each on the street (cheaper in bulk). I bought two bus tickets as well. Step one of the master plan is now taken care of.

Well, it's now after I've seen the first doctor. I got a script for 30 Valium and 60 Tylenol 4s. It was very simple. I walked in and told the receptionist I needed to see a doctor. I waited about five minutes. I walked in and told the doctor that I couldn't sleep at all at night and my back was in terrible pain. I then mentioned I was given Tylenol and Valium the first time this happened. And, boom, he wrote me a script. Man, the doctor didn't even look at me. Christ, he didn't even ask any more questions after I told him what the last doctor had given me.

On the board we have Tylenol 4s (60), Valiums (30), Electrolux (0). So I hop on another bus to see another doctor. Not bad, eh? One doctor and I've made \$150.00 already.

Well, it's now two for two on the score front. This one was a little more work but the doc still wrote the script. This time I got only one script. But he scored me 100 Tylenol 4s. This doctor looked at my back, though.

I should mention I'm a reasonably healthy twenty year old. I have no back problem at all.

These doctors must have been at the bottom of their class.

So I now have enough scripts in my pocket to make \$350.00. Bit of quick cash, eh? It's been so easy to get as well.

I now am on my way to a third doctor. Three for three. And again, no questions. The hardest question I was faced with was my Alberta Health Care number. Electrolux goes for a dollar each on the street. No problem. And I got 60. Wow! I've now made \$410.00 worth of scripts in a little under three hours. Hey, and you can't tax this income either. This is so simple. I can't believe doctors just hand out the scripts like candy. They couldn't care less as long as they get their \$45.00 from Alberta Health for the visit. And they never want to look me over. I just told him I couldn't sleep and I was under pressure. And boom, he's writing the script.

Well, I just tried the fourth doctor, and guess what? I got one more script filled. Tylenol 4s (50), and 50 Valiums. And a direction to see a specialist about my migraines. The doctor asked how long I had the headache and I told him two days. And the script was written. I still can't believe how easy it was.

The hardest part of the day was getting the prescriptions filled. I had to find four pharmacists open at ten o'clock. The scripts were all filled courtesy of a welfare card. Pretty f..ked, eh? I made almost \$500.00 in pills in less than four hours. Pills are very easy to sell. I will just take them to one guy. I spent eight bucks and made almost \$500.00. Welfare gave me \$394.00 to live on. Ha! Who says you can't live off welfare? ♦

Employment Profiles

GEORGE MUSKWA

From 1967-87, George worked summers as a fire fighter for Alberta Forest Service. From 1984-86, he worked as a maintenance man for the Town of Lesser Slave Lake. Other jobs include janitorial work for Best Cleaners And Contractors, maintenance person for St. Michael's Extended Care, a saw operator for

Something Different Oak And Art, and a meat wrapper for Edmonton Meat Packing. George is also skilled at park maintenance and is a handyman at carpentry, painting, and looking after ice arenas.

Hard working, flexible and reliable, George is seeking work related to his previous experiences. Phone: 454-8967.

DUANE GERO

Duane Gero. An inner city resident for the last eight years, Duane is seeking work in hotel security, as a desk clerk, or in construction. He has previous experience as a cashier, has worked in restaurant management, as an industrial labourer, warehouseman, shipper-receiver and as a seismic worker. Duane is looking for full-time work in the seismic field, but will work at any experience-related job. Messages to **Our Voice** in Edmonton, 423-2285. ♦



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VOICE
AUGUST 15
1996



Larry's Sister Part One

BY LAURIE McCULLOUGH

Larry was seventeen when I met him. He had an eleven year-old sister. Eyes pretty as a rainbow, laughter like bird-song. Larry's dad was a decent man who worked for Pioneer Electric, in Red Deer. Larry, on the other hand, was born to be a criminal. By the time I met him he had spent four years of his life in custody. I was a screwed up kid. Screwed up kids are anxious to be accepted and Larry liked me. I suppose he saw someone he could teach to be as he was and, since his heart told him he was born to be no damn good, he hoped to guide me through the hell he aimed his life at.

He bought me a sixteen year-old car, for a hundred bucks. I was naive enough to think it was generosity when he registered it to my name. I was the same age as the car, give or take a few months. It was a big thing for me to have eight worn cylinders and vinyl upholstery registered to my name. The old heap had no grill, but it would run. I thought it was the next best thing to a Maseratti. We used to cruise town and break into garages. One night we were getting into a Texaco station when the RCMP showed up. I was small, as I still am, but I could run like hell, as I still can. I remember the sound of that cop's boots, slapping pavement as I flew down the road to the bank of the Red Deer River. I hit the end of the street, slid through the trees with my back for a toboggan, arms flailing as I tried to catch a tree. The cop's flashlight lit the branches to left and right, above me. I looked up with wide eyes, head swinging from one direction to the other. I was terrified. When I slowed down I caught a tree. My arms wrapped around the trunk when I hit. My guts felt the way pavement feels under a jackhammer. Expelled breath left my lungs like a

trailer park after a tornado passes through. Fear has lots of power. I hung on, pretty hard. Spruce bark scraped off an ounce or so and left grooves in my belly. Blood soaked through the shirt beneath my jacket. I didn't feel a thing.

For the next hour, I never stood upright. I crawled down the bank. The snow was deep. I spotted a flat spot, figured I could bury myself in that snow and become invisible. It worked, just fine, but the snow turned out to be above a shallow spot in the river. Deep snow, but it was only about five below zero. The ice was thin. I broke through. Feet on the bottom of the river, bent from the waist so my head and shoulders wouldn't show, I huddled with cold water to my crotch. Cops are determined people. They get paid to be that way. I was aware, but unfeeling of the cold, as that damn flashlight shone above my head and across the river. It must have been an hour before I felt safe to raise my head above the snow, stumble up the bank. The garage we were breaking into was on the other side of the river, the other end of town, from the basement room I lived in. It was a long, cold walk home. I slipped down back alleys and back streets. I remember standing outside an old building, over a steel grate which breathed up a little warm air. I held my belly with bloody, sticky fingers. They froze like fire while I wished to God I could just die and get it over with.

I have had better years than my sixteenth.

Larry got away, because I was smaller. The cops chased me, instead of him, because my legs were shorter and they thought I'd be an easier catch.

I wasn't.

The car was where I left it, next day.

Larry had a fight with his dad. His father was pretty choked about the last time the cops came. Searched a decent, respectable household on account of a no good son. Larry figured a way to rip a couple hundred off his Dad's credit card. I didn't know that when he told me we should hit the road.

That's when I became a drifter.

We didn't want to waste Larry's money. Garages are great places to break into. You can trade things you steal for gas and food at garages down the road.

One garage had a dog in it. It was a German Shepherd and it was a smart German Shepherd. It waited until I got in the storage room, looking for cases of oil. Then it came after me. I went up the shelving like an elevator with dynamite under it. The dog tried to follow. Dogs have no hands, so I was safe, but I was trapped. Larry heard what was going on. He came through the back window and found a hose, turned it on the dog. I don't think that dog was afraid of hell-fire, but it was afraid of that hose.

We got out of the garage, like fast. The dog came after us. We slammed the car doors. It jumped against the car, front paws just below my window. As I was starting the engine, it whined a beseeching whine and looked sad. I put my hand on the glass and the dog licked that spot. I was intrigued. I rolled the window down, just a bit. It tried to push its nose through the small space between the glass and the metal, tongue trying to reach me. I took a chance, opened the window a bit more. Puppy love and a wet tongue got my neck. I realized it wasn't a mean dog, not at all.

It was just doing the job it hired on for.

I was out of the garage, after all.

I let her in, for she turned out to be a her, and she settled in the back seat. I guess life as a guard dog was lonely. She was more anxious to get away than we were. All I had was a package of bologna. I fed her that. Our friendship was sealed. I called her 'Tan'.

She died, two days later.

The generator in my old car broke down. I saw a car just like it with a sign on the windshield. 'For Sale, For Parts'. I stopped, across the road. Tan got out behind me. Larry called her back. She stood there, for a moment, thinking about who she'd go to. Maybe she had a stroke, or a heart attack. She fell, sideways, on the road. Her eyes looked to mine. Helpless, frightened eyes. By the time I got to her, she was dead.

I forgot about the generator.

The guy selling the car for parts helped me bury her. He had two acres. Lots of room for a dog I hardly got to know. She was the

first dog I ever buried. I buried her under a tree. Since then, I always bury dogs under trees. The guy had a big poplar. I buried her under the poplar because you can't very well put up a gravestone for a dog. Winter and blizzards, the kind of blizzards you only get in Saskatchewan, were coming, but the ground hadn't frozen.

I got a generator, for free.

We got to a town called Broadview, where I met the first Native people I ever knew. Broadview had a sleazy restaurant. It wouldn't have surprised me to learn the menu was thought up in a concentration camp. Drunks hung around there. The old man who owned the place sold bottles of vodka for less than the bootlegger. I guess I looked young and innocent, which I was. A reserve girl with breasts like cantaloupes, a face you could make dreams from, approached me as I ate a sandwich of hamburger and soggy bread in a dirty, pale green booth. The walls hadn't been painted since the days of wood heat. Grease stains on cream coloured, glossy paint. Thin and bright, the early winter sun shone through windows covered with years of dust, dried smoke from a grill which hadn't been clean in years, and fingerprints. The girl was about eighteen. Two years older than me, in her body. Twenty, in her mind. She must have figured I had money. She lit my cigarette and wrapped both arms around my shoulders.

I was smitten.

Larry got me out of there, before I got hurt.

To be completed in the next issue of *Our Voice*. ♦

IN MEMORIAM

Mary Burlie

BY LINDA DUMONT

From the day twenty-five years ago when Mary Burlie first walked into the Boyle Street Community Services Co-op to volunteer, and told Alice Hansen, "You need me, Babe," until the day of her death, Mary was a tireless worker in the cause of the inner city poor.

She was one of the most recognizable champions of the poor in Edmonton, and just weeks before her death on July 13 she was speaking out at the Womens' March Against Poverty.

At the Co-op, Mary found her true vocation in life. At the Co-op everything is "... for the needs of the poor, we do everything we can to help them," says Gloria, who worked with Mary for fifteen years. "Mary has been my rock, always there for me. She never turned anyone away. She did what she could for them, from hugs to giving them shit."

In a conversation earlier this summer Mary herself simply explained, "You do what you can. I had some knowledge of the people and the community in that area. The Boyle Street Co-op began because they recognized very early that there was a need for housing." Looking back over her career, Mary said, "There have been a lot of things accomplished. None of us has achieved the ultimate. I had high hopes and dreams that people can come together and eliminate some of the pitfalls. We need to educate people as to how valuable they are. Poverty is one of the most dreadful diseases in our society. We have to figure out how we can stop it. That means education. The Co-op has been trying to do that."

Hope Hunter, director of the Co-op, said "Mary's been with the Co-op ever since it started so in many ways the Co-op and how it works and what it believes in is the personification of Mary. I think, certainly for me personally and others who work with her, Mary taught us what it really means to have respect for people and what it really means to be supportive in ways that help people to keep their power and strength. She has taught us about justice and what's fair and what's right."



Mary's work extended far beyond the Co-op and the inner city. She was president of the Black Woman's Association and for eight years was president of Change for Children.

The daughter of an Arkansas sharecropper, she grew up in poverty. As a girl she spent long hours driving the mules in the fields. There were years of deprivation when the crops failed.

She came to Edmonton from Sacramento, California in 1969 with her late husband John and their six children. It was during a period of racial riots over bussing of poor black students, when civil rights were an explosive issue in California.

The family moved into a rambling house in downtown Edmonton. It became a haven for people. Anyone who needed someone to talk to, a word of encouragement, or a place to stay ended up at Mary's.

In recent years Mary was a well-loved public speaker who welcomed every opportunity to champion the cause of the poor, and to invite others to take up the challenge. "I feel that they must care if they are interested in listening. My whole journey has just been beautiful as far as doing presentations. There are good people out there who are interested and who want to help. We kind of isolate ourselves from each other.

We need to come together and ask, 'what can I do?'

For Mary, there were very clear rewards in her work. "Most people think you can never come out of poverty," she explained, "I say they can. It's a beautiful feeling to know that you've helped someone to get out of poverty. I remember one of the ladies shortly after I started working. She was a chronic alcoholic who had lost all of her kids. She had five children. She was just devastated. She got into drugs and alcohol. After about a year and a half, she made it. She got her kids back, met and married a guy and moved to Calgary where she went to college and won a scholarship. It took a lot of hard work and begging and pleading, but she made it."

When Mary became ill with cancer she still went to work whenever she was able to. For Mary there was no retirement. She was on sick leave, and the Co-op was very much on her heart. "I want to get back to work, to get back out there," she said. "I want to know everything. I'm nosey. I miss the people, I miss them so much," she paused, then added, "You never think these people will come forward for you, but they do. Those so-called 'bums' they call them. There's so much compassion. They are asking if there is anything they can do for me."

Gifts to the Mary Burlie Memorial Fund can be sent to the Boyle Street Co-op or to the Food Bank. ♦

"Mary grew up poor, black and female. Her wisdom outshone any academic training. She always said that she learned things no university can teach. She learned how to love without condition. She learned how to use her smile and sharp wit to turn many a tense and hostile situation into something productive for everyone. Mary kept her hard-working pace when others would have found a more rewarding occupation. She went to work more for others than for herself."

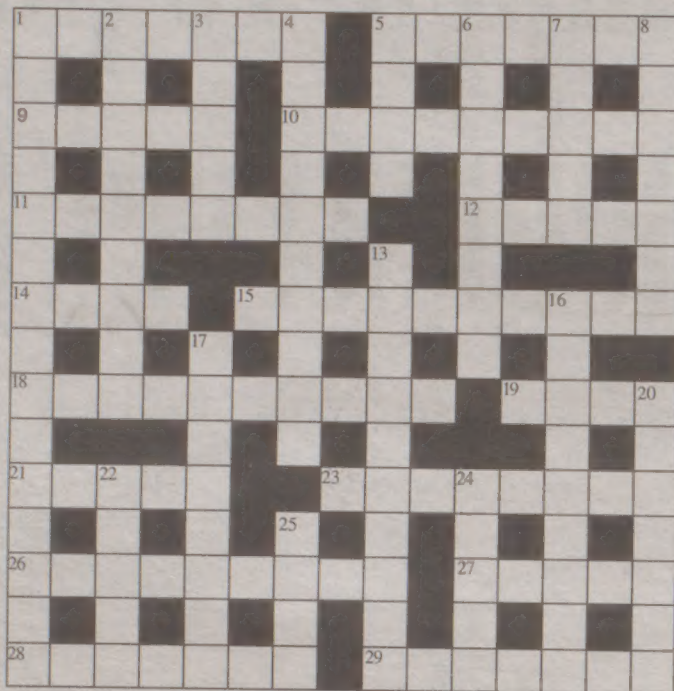
from Mary's obituary, by Hope Hunter, the Boyle Street Co-op director.

CROSSWORD • Puzzle 37

ACROSS

- 1 Piece of clothing that makes you perspire? (7)
- 5 Flat-faced breed of longhair cat (7)
- 9 Around (5)
- 10 Woodworker (9)
- 11 Mature almost to the point of being rotten (4,4)
- 12 Japanese city (5)
- 14 Lead pellets fired from a smooth-bore gun (4)
- 15 Blue-gray colour – or edible snail (10)
- 18 Bad luck (10)
- 19 Slang for coke (4)
- 21 Frighten, startle (5)
- 23 Mounted games and races on horses (8)
- 26 Extent of a radio wave (9)
- 27 Not these? (5)
- 28 Came out, appeared (7)
- 29 'Death-star' which may collide with Earth

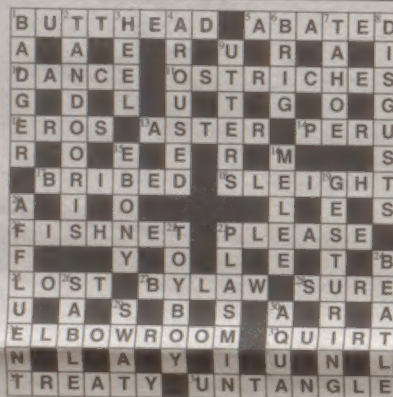
BY SUSAN ANDREWS



DOWN

- 1 Dark areas where light surrounds an object (7)
- 2 Sexually sensitive zones (9)
- 3 Slang for a fried potato (5)
- 4 Those who are to get something (10)
- 5 To trim (4)
- 6 The art of communicating effectively (8)
- 7 Prefix denoting activity within one (4)
- 8 To recite details of a story (7)
- 13 Organ-shaped legume (6,4)
- 16 Large jumping marsupials (9)
- 17 Solemn, serious (8)
- 18 Oops! (7)
- 20 Longboats used for chasing marine mammals (7)
- 22 Spartan, Golden Delicious, Mac (5)
- 24 Sudanese town near the Marra mountains (5)
- 25 Good idea to invest in one (4)

Answers to August 1 Crossword #36

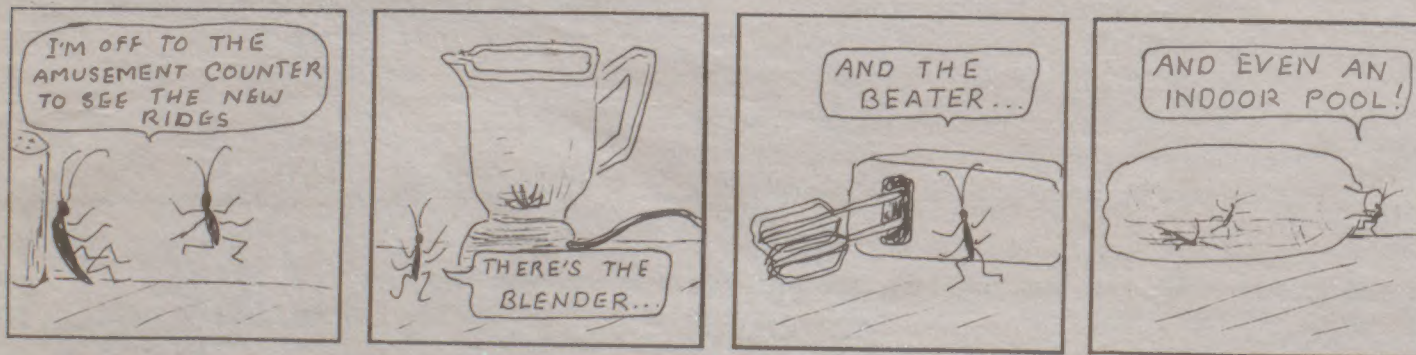


► Puzzle 37 answers will be published in the September 1 issue of *Our Voice*.

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Calgary Stampeders put up the points to help street agency

12

BY C WATSON

Look out for No. 60, Bruce Covernton, The Big Tuna, 292 pounds of fighting fit muscle and grit! Roar!

When he's not playing offensive tackle for the Calgary Stampeders The Big Tuna looks down on the rest of the world quite amiably from his 6'5" height. He's a good guy to have on your side as one Calgary helping agency well knows.

People at Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) are delighted to have Bruce and the Stampeders pulling for them. They watch those home-game points made by the Stamps. Every point means a \$25 corporate donation to CUPS. It was \$9,000 for the 360 home game points in their 1995 season.

For the past four years Covernton has been the official spokesman for CUPS. He volunteered his time when he was a rookie in 1992 and was pleased to stay with it. "But, it's not just me," he points out. "A couple of other guys (Stampeders) always go with me to events and help out too."

"A lot of guys are involved in a lot of things. Our team are givers. At least eight guys do extra stuff. During the season it's tough. We get one day off a week and we're sore and tired. But we do it when time permits. It's worthwhile." Bruce participated in the unveiling of the spectacular mural on the side of the CUPS building last year.

Those other events include Regal Auction's annual benefit car auction. Covernton says cars, "beaters up to \$1,500", are donated and all funds go to CUPS. "They have held three now. We normally take some

jerseys and footballs to auction as well, and we sign autographs there." Covernton has fun trying his hand at auctioneering and puts lots of energy into getting the crowd enthusiastic.

Covernton also speaks for support of CUPS at the annual Stampeders Kick-off breakfast in late May,

counsel, gives them help and gets them moving in the right direction. People don't know the stories of people on the street. They think: 'There's a bum!' But it's not a goal to live on the streets."

What about that nickname, then? The Big Tuna drove a white Delta 88 at Weber State College,

OUR
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The Big Tuna helps out for the homeless



▲ The Big Tuna Bruce Covernton.



▲ Every home game point helps people.

organized by Phillips Petroleum at the Palliser Hotel. Companies sponsor tables and sponsor the at-home games. They contribute the \$25 to CUPS for every point that the Stampeders make. It's a wonderful, collaborative effort between professional sports and corporations to support CUPS and help others.

Covernton likes what CUPS is doing. "You or I could end up homeless," he says. "Something tragic happens and where do you go? CUPS gives people

Ogden, Utah. Someone began calling it The Tunaboat and the name stuck. Anyone driving a tuna boat had to be a tuna, or The Big Tuna, when he was the size of Covernton. And that's it. ♦

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